

Chapter 14

CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN

Dr. Mustafa DAMAR, Öğr. Gör. Gökçen İLHAN İLDİZ

Children might be exposed to violence from early ages due to several factors. They might face violence in almost every aspect of daily life. They might encounter violence in their family, street, peer groups, TV programs, cartoons they watch, video games they play and books they read. Violence occurred simultaneously with the history of humanity and has a complex nature with many individual and social aspects. With its long history, violence has been perceived in different ways by different societies and different segments of communities. How violence is perceived by societies is important because positive meanings might be attributed to violence in societies where violence is adopted and recognized in people's life. This might lead to unfavorable circumstances by which children are most likely to be affected. Violence does not only target children. They learn environmental violence by modeling and begin to practice it themselves. Violence might be integrated to daily life in domestic relations, educational institutions, peer groups and in every segment of the society. Consequently, a serious risk occurs that children encounter when unfavorable effects of violence on children are considered. Development of a society depends on physical and mental development of children living in that society (Bostancı, Albayrak, Bakoğlu and Çoban, 2006). Children who grow in a violence-free, safe and loving family environment and educational institution keep on developing as self-confident, self respecting, adaptable individuals at peace with themselves and society. Violence has turned into a very complex issue with the major and rapid changes in contemporary societies. This complex nature of violence might stem not only from children but also family and other social environments to a certain extent. Thus, violence occurs as a significant problem, giving serious harm to children and affecting children and society negatively. This harm might be physical, psychological, social and economic. Violence affects children's development, particularly their mental health negatively (Postema, 2006). Violence that children are exposed to is a serious obstacle against their ability to live as free and respectable individuals and realize themselves (Pinheiro, 2006). Children are important for society as well as families. They are believed to secure the future of societies and thus must be trained, saved, supported and developed. Keeping children away from violence, eliminating causes of violence against children, raising social awareness are important tasks of all organizations and institutions.

Conclusion

Violence is a concept that is increasingly encountered in every field of life. It has turned into a very complex issue with the great and rapid change in current societies. Thus, violence stands as a significant problem. This complex nature of violence might stem from not only children but also family and other social environments to certain extents. Children are the group most affected by violence. Literature review reveals that family is the environment where children are most exposed to violence and the most typical violence against children is physical violence. Violence committed against children harms them seriously, affecting them and the whole society negatively. Outcomes of this harm might be psychological, social and economic.

Again, studies have proven that children who are exposed to or witness violence are negatively affected in both short and long term particularly socially and emotionally. Considering the emotional, behavioral and developmental problems of children exposed to violence, it might be said that they are under increasing risk of committing violence or being exposed to violence during the rest of their lives. Initial years of life, particularly the first six years are extremely important for children. As they grow, their social circle widens and sources of violence begin to change.

This point indicates that we must focus on childhood period in order to prevent violent behavior. One of the ways of preventing violence against children is to raise social awareness. Increasing the number of studies on child and violence and dealing with this subject under every discipline will certainly raise awareness of violence. Educators as well as parents must be well informed. This awareness is particularly important for every segment of society to carry out its own responsibilities.

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